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Thesis

THE MUSIC TEACHER AS A TEACHER OF CHORAL SPEAKING

Submitted by

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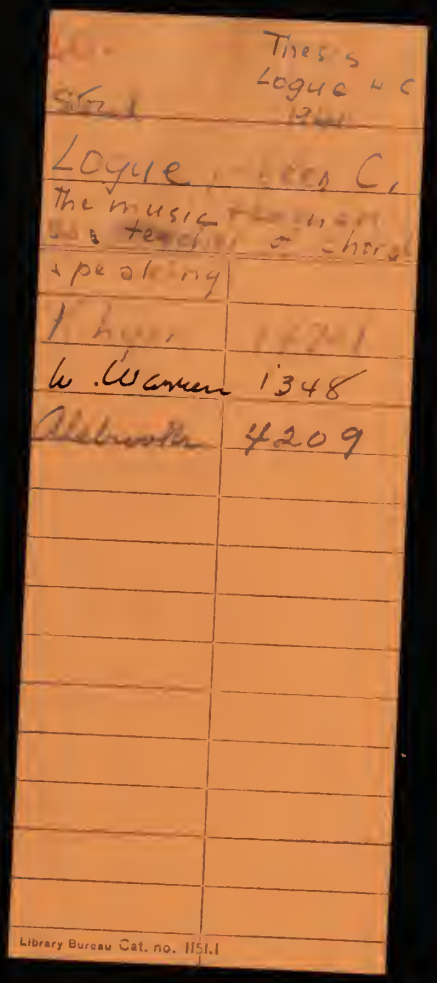
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THE MUSIC TEACHER AS A TEACHER OF CHORAL SPEAKING

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THE MUSIC TEACHER AS A TEACHER OF CHORAL SPEAKING

Until a few years ago this writer had been entirely unacquainted with the art of choral speaking. Recently in the Graduate School of Boston University the Dean suggested that because of previous concentration in music it might be advisable to widen the scope of studies to include subjects in various new fields. One of the courses elected was choral speaking.

Since graduation from college the field of service has been that of teaching all branches of music - theoretical, vocal, and instrumental - in accordance with the requirements of the Boston Public Schools.

Now, since it is always a pleasure to meet even "a friend of an old friend" in a strange city, the reader may well imagine the surprise and delight with which this new subject, choral speaking, was welcomed once it had proved to be the "friend of an old friend", - music. Of course choral speaking was not the same as music, but there were so many phases of the two arts which

were similar, so many features of one which dovetailed completely into the other, that they led to an absorbing interest in the subject, to extensive reading and research, and finally to experimentation with actual groups of children.

From the very beginning it became evident that training and experience in the teaching of music could be carried over successfully into a systematized program of choral speaking. No rash judgment this, as personal results of the past few years have proven. The properly trained music teacher can teach choral speaking with the same degree of effectiveness as is attained in the music field. When, therefore, the time came for the writing of a thesis this subject was chosen.

While it is true that critical analyses of poetry abound in allusions to the similarities of poetry and music, yet nowhere has this writer found in all his research that a music teacher has ever been suggested as a possible teacher of choral speaking.

The subject is taught in colleges of liberal arts under the department of English, in schools of education and teachers' colleges under the same supervision, and in colleges of oratory as a variety of the spoken word.

Conservatories and colleges of music make no mention whatever of this closely related art in their lists of courses. As a result, since the poems and prose are in the English language, whenever a program of choral speaking is initiated in a school the English teacher - especially if she has taken even one course in the subject - is invariably drafted as organizer and director of the verse speaking choir. How many dismal failures are the result of this unwise choice.

Superintendents and principals learn what has already been accomplished in other cities and towns; they are vitally interested in giving the children under their direction the same benefits. Failure of the English teacher to secure the desired results means an abandonment of the program and the consequent irreparable loss in the education

and culture of the pupils.

When this experience has taken place a number of times, many otherwise progressive heads of school systems find it advisable to forget the whole subject under the erroneous impression that choral speaking is just another form of the old time "concert recitation" and therefore, not worthy of further consideration or experimentation.

The purpose of this paper is to present in as convincing a manner as possible the firm conviction on the part of the writer that, due to the possession of fundamental capacities which have been developed by years of training and study along musical lines, the music teacher and not always the teacher of English should be the one chosen to inaugurate and carry through to a successful conclusion a program of choral speaking in a school or college.

With the view of convincing the reader, there will be presented a condensed history of the use of the Chorus in drama through three thousand years, an outline of the preparation of the student who aspires to become a teacher of music will be given,

some explanation of the present use of choral speaking and its aims and objectives will be attempted in brief form, and a comparison of music and poetry will be followed in the conclusion of the thesis by the statement of the underlying reasons by which it will be seen that the music teacher is well qualified to teach choral speaking.

In order to obtain a firm grasp of any subject it is always well to go back to the beginning of its history. Inasmuch as our knowledge of primitive man is necessarily very limited, it can only be presumed that, although he possessed the organs of speech, he was poor in vocal expression. That his emotions, however, were as deep if not deeper than ours is the unanimous opinion of anthropologists. The untamed forces of nature around him, the savage beasts of his time, his human enemies of other tribes, - all filled him with nameless terror. Very early he felt the need of having the gods on his side, whether they be the gods of nature

or the gods of war. It is small wonder then that we find primitive man throwing himself with his whole being into a form of rhythmic movement, - the dance.

Once again the curtain of obscurity blocks the vision of one who attempts to learn in exactly what manner the element of rhythm was discovered. Was the idea born of the imitation of the sounds of nature in the chirping of insects, of the rhythmic succession of waves on the shore, or of the savages' own heartbeats and footsteps? One cannot be sure, but definite proofs of the rhythmic dances are found pictured on caves in widely scattered regions as evidence of their universal use as a means of expression.

In his fervor of religious ecstasy, early man was led to add his voice to his stampings and swayings and turnings by way of emphasis. A louder shout naturally accompanied the heavier stamps and, being pleased with the effect thus produced, he elaborated these vocal rhythmic sounds into chants which could be varied in form

to serve either as prayers or as war chants. At whatever stages of development these chants became more than an incoherent succession of sounds, there arose the momentous beginnings of conscious poetry.

It may well be asked if all the foregoing is not strictly conjectural. The question may be argued from both sides, but it seems reasonable to believe that the developments of primitive man in the earliest stages closely parallel those of the few uncivilized peoples of the world today. From these existing tribes in the African jungles, in the South Sea Islands, and from the traditions still carried out by the American Indians, authorities are able to put the various pieces of the mosaic together into a continuous pattern of orderly sequence.

Similarly, music also traces its ancestry directly to its use as an addition to the primitive dances and chants. The rhythm having been established and accentuated by stamping, clapping, and the beating of drums, the element of melody now claims the attention of early man. One can picture

primitive man becoming aware of the variation in pitch of bird notes, in the sound of the rise and fall of the wailing wind as it sighs through the trees, - or perhaps the notes drawn from the open tops of bamboo stockades as the wind passes over them. These sounds fascinate him. Can he match them or imitate them? He puts his ingenuity to work to fashion the first crude instruments made of wood or bone, and into which he blows his own breath. He dances now to the music of these new instruments, adding his voice in imitation of them as he performs his ritualistic dances. Present day aborigines still use the same type of instruments which are found in the prehistoric caves of the common ancestors of all mankind.

Authorities differ widely as to their views of the emergence of dramatic form. There is no agreement among them when they attempt to trace the way in which plot action became added to the dance, poetry, and music. Some believe it to have been a natural development of these three.

They base their assumption on the fact that Greek, Hindu, and Japanese dramas can all be traced to known dance origins. Other equally famous historians contend that the dramatic element came spontaneously.

Although the civilization of the early poeples was crude as compared to ours, they still felt very deeply, expressed themselves in their dances and chants with great intensity, and were emotionally in advance of modern man. Certain authors are led to believe that some form of spontaneous mimicry introduced the dramatic touch, and that it was entirely unpremeditated. Recognized as increasing immeasurably the emotional and pictorial value of the dance, the newly discovered plot action was retained and developed. In all cases, as the curtain rises upon historic man, it is found that several dramatic elements have already been combined with the dance and the chant to form a hitherto unknown kind of worship and entertainment. a.

a. An Art Philosopher's Cabinet - Raymond, p. 120

The first group known to have presented what might be considered dramatic pieces was a secret society, - the Areoi of Polynesia. Bands of players traveled to the islands of the Polynesian group and presented to the people ritual dances accompanied by appropriate chants, pantomimes, historical sketches, and comedy pieces. Since the dates of these performances are not possible of verification, it can only be inferred that they antedated by any great number of years the plays of the Egyptians and the Hebrews.

Seven or six centuries before Christ the world's earliest recorded dramatic production took place. The play OSIRIS, telling the story of the life of the chief Egyptian god, was given as an annual event over a period of several years. Osiris was the leading character, and after his death his body was carried long distances by great numbers of people who took part in the processions. Many of the details of the play are missing, especially those concerning the manner in which

the processions of Egyptian people gave voice to the stipulated words. Legend does not go so far as to designate whether they were chanted or sung.

In the case of the Hebrew drama, it can be noted that the Book of Job and the Songs of Solomon are actually cast in dialogue form. They were group chants or songs. It is a pity that, since both are long dramatic poems, history has nowhere stated whether or not they were performed with dramatic action. One must pass rather reluctantly from these early beginnings to a consideration of the rise and decline of the greatest dramatic era which the world has ever known.

Real drama began in Greece in the sixth and fifth centuries before Christ. It was essentially religious drama. According to the beliefs of the Greeks, everything must be made as beautiful as possible in the service of the gods. No architecture was too perfect, no sculpture too noble for the adornment of their temples. From the dramatic ritual to the graceful dancing; from the contests in athletic skills to the processions and revels - wherever and whenever these events took place they

were dominated by a devotional spirit. By the very fact of their participation, the Greeks felt that for the time they had become gods themselves. It is true that the revels very often became drunken orgies, but this does not lessen the appreciation of them. It must be kept continually in mind that the pagan Greeks took this means of honoring their favorite god, Dionysus, the god of wine, and what better way could there be of singing his praises than while partaking of his bounty?

Greek artists have pictured the processions in honor of Dionysus in which large numbers of people are shown roaming the streets and giving expression to their joy as they chant and dance. On these occasions religious emotion and the wildest revelry did not seem incongruous.

In this way Dionysus became the successor to the gods of the primitive people. As the crowds danced in the processions crying his name and praising him, a few separated themselves from the larger groups and became Chorus leaders. It is not known exactly in what manner this took place,-

whether the leaders were chosen by the people or forced themselves to places of prominence by reason of their intricate dance steps, the power of their voices to carry further than the others in the open air, or because of some talent for composing unusual poems to suit the occasion. It seems very probable that it was the latter.

In this connection the "dithyramb" is mentioned by Aristotle. It is a kind of poetry used at the festivals in which the story of Dionysus is told in verse, and there are distinct parts for the leader in which he plays in turn several characters and is answered by the Chorus. This is the birth of true dramatic art.

In the long history of the drama there is no more important theatre than the immense bowl-like outdoor theatre of Dionysus at Athens. Here, in the year 535 B. C., Thespis of Icaria achieved immortality by winning the first tragedy contest. He was henceforth to be known not only as the first recognized leader of the Chorus but also as the first actor in recorded history.

It may be well at this time to consider the

plays presented in this famous theatre, paying special attention to the Chorus which was of such great importance that it can rightly be called the pivotal element. Stateliness of gesture and movement coupled with rare beauty of tonal quality and clear diction of the voices characterized the Chorus of the Greek drama.

The play text of the prize-winning tragedy of Thespis was rather crude. The leader changed masks and costumes to play the various roles. He spoke his lines, acted out his parts, and was answered by the Chorus.

Ten years later, Aeschylus added a second actor to his tragedies, and the Chorus shared the dialogue in equal proportions with the players. The number of lines spoken by the Chorus was lessened and its importance decreased in comparison with its use in previous dramas. It remained for Sophocles to formulate the first compact acted-spoken drama.

In his works the actors became for the first time of more importance than the Chorus. Through-

out the lifetime of Sophocles and of Euripides, however, the Chorus continued to enhance the dramatic design of the plays. These actors came onto the stage in mass formation or in a procession with rhythmic step and graceful gesture. Clad in appropriate costumes they sang or chanted their lyrical poetry. They are heard commenting on the action of the plays, supplicating the gods, or simply adding a decorative element which served as an emotional release in times of overbearing stress.

As an illustration of the best in Greek drama, showing the functions of the Chorus before its gradual decline, there if no finer example than the tragedy OEDIPUS, THE KING. In what is perhaps Sophocles' best known play, the characters themselves attract and hold the attention of the audience. One follows the story with interest and discovers that the Chorus, while still of great value, is no longer paramount.

The gods have sent their vengeance upon the people of the city in the form of a pestilence. There is one in their midst who is unclean. Laius,

the former king, has been murdered and the pestilence will remain until the unclean one has been discovered and punished. Oedipus vows that he shall not rest until the murderer has been apprehended.

With great effectiveness the Chorus enters. They are half dancing, half chanting, with slow stateliness. They wend their way to the altar of Apollo. Here they repeat the story of the pestilence and pray that the anger of the gods may be appeased.

The climax is soon reached. Oedipus forces the old blind prophet to tell him the truth as he has learned it from the Oracle at Delphi. Reluctantly the tale unfolds itself from the lips of the prophet. Oedipus himself is the unclean person! In an encounter with a supposed enemy he had unknowingly killed his own father, Laius. To add to the horror, the prophet also reveals the fact that, without realizing her identity, Oedipus had married his own mother, Jacosta, twelve years before.

Overwhelmed by bitter remorse, he inflicts

his own form of punishment. Blinded and bleeding, he returns to the stage. He can be king no longer; his children are dragged away from him lest they be contaminated. As the pitiful figure of Oedipus is led from the stage the Chorus is again heard:

> Therefore, O man, Beware, and look toward the end of things that be,
> The last of sights, the last of days: and no man's life account at gain
> Ere the full tale be finished and the darkness find him without pain. a.

What sublime tragedy! Here is a play in poetic form which moves one deeply, is acted with rare understanding, and is much enriched by the chanting and by the rhythmic movements of the Chorus. OEDIPUS, THE KING has been reviewed in some detail as it stands in the position of model for the perfect drama of all times and of all ages.

It was the Roman influence, bringing with it the over-emphasis of the element of spectacle, which did so much to hasten the decadence of Greek drama. In place of the Chorus, hordes of captives and kings in chains were driven across the stage;

a. The Theatre - Cheney, p. 46

camels and elephants added to the confusion - truly a Roman spectacle! The Roman citizen need never lack sensational pageantry for he had only to go to the arenas to see gladiators battling, chariot races, or Christian martyrs being sacrificed.

To students of the drama the comedies of Plautus and Terence are of special interest, but the Chorus has temporarily disappeared. The Roman Empire has grown rich and powerful and vice is rampant. Nowhere is this more evident than in the stage productions. Low jokes, suggestive situations, and disgusting gestures characterize the comedies. Roman degeneration is accurately mirrored by its stage.

The decline of the Roman Empire approaches. Spurred by religious zeal and with moral courage, the Christian fathers place a ban upon the now licentious drama and comedy. The last recorded date of the Roman theatre is 535 A. D.

During the interval before the rise of the Christian theatre wandering groups of minstrels and troubadours toured throughout Europe and

provided entertainment especially at the courts of princes and kings. They were poets as well as musicians and actors, recounting in their verses and songs tales of heroism, love idylls, and humorous anecdotes.

To eager listeners of the twelfth century in England, the minstrels and bards chanted the tales of Robin Hood and his merry men before large groups in the palaces or on the village greens. There was romance and adventure in the story of this almost legendary character which stirred the emotions of the minstrels and of their audiences. Of noble and adventurous Norman blood, Robin Hood spurned the life of ease that might have been his at the courts and chose to live the free life of the forest.

It appears that all the available forest land of that time belonged to King Henry II, and hunting was forbidden. The tales of Robin Hood's rebellion against the unjust laws regarding the woods, of his remarkable skill with bow and arrow, of his flight from the wrath of the sheriffs, of the meeting with other adventurous souls in the forest glades and

the growth of his band of merry followers who linked their fortunes with his, - all are as enjoyable to young and old today as they were in the days of the minstrels.

Chanted or sung by the bards in the huge Norman halls or in the inn-yards, the audience joined in the choruses and showed approval and enthusiasm by the clapping of hands and the stamping of feet in rhythm. The ballads of Robin Hood spread rapidly from town to town until they had become familiar in every part of England.

While they possess no great poetic value, the stories they tell in their lilting cadences have a fascination all their own. THE BALLAD OF ROBIN HOOD AND THE JOLLY PINDER OF WAKEFIELD will be cited as an example of the type of ballad in which the people joined their voices to that of the minstrel each time a line of the verse was repeated.

In Wakefield there lives a jolly pinder,
In Wakefield all on the green,
In Wakefield all on the green.
"There is neither knight nor squire," said
the pinder,

"Nor baron so bold,
Nor baron so bold,
Dare make trespass to the town of Wakefield,
But his pledge goes to the pinfold,
But his pledge goes to the pinfold." a.

Christian drama began in the tenth century as a means of instructing the people in their faith. The Mass itself is a dramatic representation of the Last Supper, and lent itself readily to enrichment by the addition of antiphonal dialogue which was sung, chanted, and acted. This change marks the beginning of "Liturgical Drama" and also the inauguration of a movement which, having as its objective religious instruction, came to maturity in the Mystery Plays, the Morality Plays, and the Miracle Plays.

As heretofore, one searches for any indications of the presence of the Chorus in the religious drama. It is very evident, but in the form of groups of devils and of angels. Nevertheless, the use of the Chorus is still that of furthering dramatic interest. The clergy themselves become the trained actors. They bring to the drama

a. The Merry Ballads of Robin Hood - Dietrick and Walsh, p. 43

a transcending spirituality and uplifting nobility of purpose never to be found after this period in the whole history of the theatre.

Neither are the settings, the pageantry, nor the sincerity and conviction of the delivery of the dialogue of this era to be duplicated. Church drama grows too complicated for the interior of the churches and takes its place on the porches outside of the great cathedrals of Europe. One can imagine, for example, no more perfect setting for this type of play than the porch of the Rheims Cathedral with its background of magnificent and stately architecture containing the famous Rose Window. The actors come into view and retreat dramatically from one's vision through the huge doors. Music is heard coming from the interior of the cathedral; the Chorus sings or chants. One and all are edified by the presentation.

Why cannot this sincere art continue to develop through the ages? Again comes the old story of the creeping in of abuses by certain

groups until the Church is again obliged for the protection of the morals of the people and of its own inherent dignity to place a ban upon the theatre.

On festival days the church-theatre is desecrated. The Chorus, so sublime on other occasions, arrives appropriately costumed for the Feast of Fools and the Feast of Asses. The common people and minor clergy take part. They ridicule the religious drama on the very spot of its presentation. The actors mock the original parts, the Chorus sings ribald songs and even descends to drinking, feasting gluttonously, and dice-throwing on the porches of the cathedrals. Emboldened, they enter the sacred precincts of the cathedrals to continue their revelry. One can imagine no excess too low for the vulgar antics of these would-be actors.

The ecclesiastical descendents of the Church fathers who had spent three hundred years driving the licentious farces from the Roman theatres are now obliged to spend three additional centuries ridding their own domains of these same abuses.

The theatre passes out of the Church forever and into the hands of the guilds.

The Medieval theatre is secular in spite of its continued use of Morality Plays, Mystery Plays, and Miracle Plays. Sincerity and reverence are lacking. Humorous passages for comedy relief are injected. Public squares and cross-roads are used as outdoor theatres. Drama becomes completely commercialized, and the plays of this period are noted neither for their dramatic value nor for their characterization. They serve merely as a connecting link between the theatre of the Church and that of the Renaissance.

As the Renaissance was brought about chiefly through a revival of interest in the classical studies thereby bringing to light again the culture of pagan Greece and Rome, so also the theatre turns to these same sources. Commerce has carried to the shores of Italy the wealth of the Orient as well as its philosophy. The people become more worldly-minded and less religious.

The standards of Christian morality are

challenged by the new "Humanism" which preaches the enjoyment of the present life at its fullest since nobody has ever had a second chance and none have returned with the assurance of what awaits the human being in the hereafter. With much enthusiasm and vigor, Renaissance Europe sets forth to seek its own pleasures, and having uncovered the methods used by the ancients, proceeds to throw off the restraint of the Church and to commit the same old excesses which invariably accompany sudden freedom.

Greek and Roman dramas and farces are presented in the over-ornamented Renaissance theatres. The costumes and the scenery become more lavish than ever before. The old simplicity and dignity are absent in the desire for sumptuous display. Imitation of the ancients continues until it exhausts itself in lifeless mimicry. When the Chorus appears it is hardly recognizable in its gorgeous trappings accompanied by extreme artificiality of voice and manner. None of the plays of this period achieve true immortality.

Up to this time the theatre had been dominated by men of genius and real intellectual power, but the main element of the audience in England was losing its national character. Few were interested in plots dealing with humanity. The playwright who had a message was speaking to the deaf, as his hearers were not in accord with him. The time came when, instead of painting people as they were, the writers organized their plays so that the fullest use was made of the mechanical operations of the stage settings, the pompous demeanor of the actors, and the shallowness of their characterizations.

Satires began to creep in. They contained biting criticisms of the pedantic tendencies of the former dramatists and barbed witticisms aimed at the plays of their contemporaries. The latter lashed back vigorously as they could see their own follies mirrored, and made the writers of the first satires the butts of their own jokes. This battle of wits waxed and waned and finally died out as the playwrights began to delete the most pithy lines. They substituted instead meaningless phrases which were delivered by actors who were costumed in poor taste and appeared ludicrous on the stage.

As a reaction against the over display of the Renaissance theatre, Pastoral Plays are given having for their settings gardens or woodlands. The chief characters are Pan and his fauns and nymphs. The human characters are shepherds and shepherdesses, showing plainly a certain nostalgia even among the nobles for the simple things of life.

One of the finest of these Pastoral Plays deserves special mention here. It is AMINTA by Tasso. The story is charming and the poetry is exquisite. The Chorus appears in shepherd costume and tells of the joys of pastoral life. AMINTA achieved a fame that spread far beyond its native Italy. It was translated into both English and French and was played widely all over Europe.

Only one other play of this type shared equal honors. It is the FAITHFUL SHEPHERD by Guarini, a few lines of which will be quoted as an illustration of the way in which the author expresses the idea of the love of nature and of its simplicity.

Amarillis

Dear, happy groves!
And thou all silent, solitary gloom,
True residence of peace and repose!
How willingly, how willingly my steps
To you return; and oh! if but my stars
Benignly had decreed
My life for solitude .....
No, not th' Elysian Fields,
Those happy gardens of the Demi-Gods,
Would I exchange for your enchanting shades! .....
The rural maid now blest,
Who though but scantly drest,
In homely gown, and plain,
Unsullied with a stain;
Rich in herself alone ..... a.

It was near the close of the fifteenth century that a series of momentous meetings took place at the palace of Count Bardi in Florence. A group of amateur musicians met there to discuss the arts and to recite poetry as well as to sing and play instruments for the enjoyment of all. Quite naturally the conversation turned to the classical dramas of the old Greek theatres. These men were interested in the entire dramas, but especially did the subject of the Chorus claim their attention. They

a. The Theatre - Cheney, p. 212

had learned from the old manuscripts that the poetry declaimed by the Chorus had been further enriched in many cases by musical accompaniment. This music, however, had been lost forever.

Could they not recreate something similar to the Greek drama with music? From these simple beginnings was fashioned a new type of drama which they termed "opera" or "work", and which is probably a shorter form of "work in music and drama."

At first the difficult union of music and drama was accomplished by the use of "recitative", or the singing of many words on a single tone. The play and the music were equal sharers of importance. The words of the plays, whether delivered by single actors or by the Choruses, were mainly chanted to the accompaniment of instrumental music. The music, however, was an essential part of the structural pattern of the plays. Peri's DAFNE and Peri and Caccini's EURIDICE are of this early type and served as models for experimentation by the composers who followed.

The new art of opera, returning to Greek and Roman mythology for its themes, was soon accepted

as an established form of entertainment in the palaces of the kings and princes of Europe. It is the next development of opera which makes it necessary to leave its further consideration to students of music and to music lovers the world over.

Monteverdi, Cavalli, Cesti, and Scarlatti, - as each succeeding composer took up the new art form, the "recitative" was relegated to a position of less and less importance. Melody now became paramount. The orchestra was enlarged; the element of harmony, or the blending of many consonant musical sounds, was discovered and developed; and opera, which was soon to become "grand opera" passed from the province of drama to that of music. The Chorus of the opera sang instead of chanting, but the speaking Chorus was still retained in the spoken drama.

Of the predecessors of Shakespeare the only true genius was Christopher Marlowe. He wrote only four plays before his untimely death while still a youth in a tavern brawl. His second play, THE TRAGICAL HISTORY OF DOCTOR FAUSTUS,

serves to give an insight into what might have been the heights to which this author would have risen but for his tragic murder. In Doctor Faustus' last terrible hours the face of Helen is conjured up before him. He speaks:

> Was this the face that launched a thousand ships
> And burnt the topless tours of Illium?
> Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.
> (Kisses her.)
> Her lips suck forth my soul, see where it flies! -
> Come, Helen, come, give me my soul again.
> Here will I dwell, for Heaven is in those lips,
> And all is dross that is not Helena ..... a.

The closing lines of the play, so often quoted as being prophetic of Marlowe's early death, are spoken by the Chorus:

> Cut is the branch that grows full straight,
> And burned is Apollo's laurel bough ..... b.

Without doubt the greatest name in the history of English drama is that of William Shakespeare. His plays are so well known even to high school students that only a few will be mentioned here, and these will be the ones which give the fullest use to the Chorus as a means of furthering dramatic value.

a. The Theatre - Cheney, p. 268

b. The Theatre - Cheney, p. 267

In the prologue of the play JULIUS CAESAR, the Chorus sets the scene and prepares the audience for the tragic love story which is to follow.

Two households, both alike in dignity,
In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.
From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
A pair of star-crossed lovers take their life:
Whose misadventur'd piteous overthrows
Do, with their death, bury their parents' strife.
The fearful passage of their death-marked love,
And the continuance of their parents' rage,
Which, but their children's end naught could remove,
Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;
The which if you with patient ears attend,
What here shall miss, out toil shall strive to mend. a.

Each lover of Shakespeare's works has a different outlook as to what constitutes his most nearly perfect drama. Many concede that JULIUS CAESAR, both in form and in content, ranks at the zenith of his dramatic art. The scene in which Mark Anthony, after the murder of Caesar, is able to claim the attention of the Roman citizens, to relate to them Caesar's virtues, to picture his tragic betrayal and death, and to stir them up

a. World's Greatest Literature - Davidow, Vol. VII, p. 136

to such a frenzy that they turn on his murderers, is masterly in its cumulative effect. The voices of the citizens in the Chorus show incredulity at first, then tolerance, and finally they rise to a wild crescendo as they plan to wreak vengeance upon the perpetrators of Caesar's murder.

Choruses of ghosts, of fairies, and of attendants to the principal characters are common in Shakespeare's plays. They give definite proof of the writer's familiarity with the various types of dramas which preceded his own.

Upon the rise of the Puritans to power in England, in spite of the influence of Shakespeare, the theatre had become so perverted that they felt forced to ban all dramatic performances. It must be admitted that they had much of that which is right on their side. A completely commercialized theatre had been catering to the lower element of society for many years and, as in the stage of the present day, was giving the public what it seemed to want, - bawdy and suggestive filth. Theatres produced plays many of which are still shocking even to blase readers of the twentieth century.

The theatres became meeting places for the outcasts of society and were managed so disgracefully as to outrage the Puritan sense of morality.

In the period during which the Puritan ban on the theatre was in force plays were still being written in the universities, and these were played at the court of James I. Ben Jonson and John Milton wrote majestic poetry, but their plays lacked real dramatic value. Jonson's more than thirty masque-texts have fine lyrical charm and were produced with elaborate costuming and dancing. Apart from the masques and the activities of the Boys' Choir of London, a company of young professional actors, there were practically no dramatic productions in England until after the Restoration.

A glimpse at the doings across the English Channel is necessary before bringing this summary of the drama up to modern times. The stage of France had been in a chaotic condition since the wild imitations of the Italian farces during the fifteenth century.

About the year 1550, a band of French poets

under the leadership of Ronsard formed a group called the "Pleid". In common with so many other serious minded students of their day in other countries they wished to return to the ideals of the classicists. While doing so, they also had as their aim the enrichment and clarification of the newly-formed French language. In the plays of these poets, especially in Ronsard's masterpiece CLEOPATRE CAPTIVE, a rhetorical tragedy, one finds such classical features as a Chorus and a ghost.

Hardy, Corneille, Racine, and Moliere who followed the "Pleid" poets gradually dropped the Chorus from their works, giving instead to the characters of their dramas and comedies qualities which were intensely human. Occasionally one finds a Chorus used as in the drama ATHALIE by Racine. In this play the Chorus is indispensable, probably because of its derivation from a Biblical text.

Cardinal Newman, whose lifetime encompassed most of the nineteenth century, is best known for his poem THE PILLAR OF THE CLOUD. This sacred

lyric which has been set to music and is commonly called LEAD KINDLY LIGHT from the words of its first line is familiar and much loved wherever the English language is spoken.

Nevertheless, his long poem THE DREAM OF GERONTIUS is as truly great, being admired more and more each year by the intellectual world. It may best be described as a metrical meditation on death. Newman typifies in this dramatic poem not alone the soul of Gerontius but also the soul of any human being fortunate enough to meet the approval of the judgment of a merciful God. This is accomplished forcibly and appealingly.

THE DREAM OF GERONTIUS has been compared to the PURGATORIO of Dante, to Milton's PARADISE LOST, to Rossetti's THE BLESSED DAMOSEL, and to Tennyson's IN MEMORIAM. Careful study of Newman's poem will reveal an exalted purity, a beauty of expression, and musical cadences which cannot be surpassed. The oftener one reads THE DREAM OF GERONTIUS, the more clearly one feels its beauty, its power, and its peace.

Gerontius is dying. Around his bedside are

his friends and the priest.

GERONTIUS

Jesu, Maria - I am near to death,
And Thou art calling me; I know it now -
Not by the token of this faltering breath,
This chill at heart, this dampness on my brow..

ASSISTANTS

Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison....
Choirs of the righteous, pray for him .... a.

Gerontius dies, and is taken by his Guardian Angel to the throne of God. The Demons make a last attempt to win his soul.

DEMONS

Low born clods
Of brute earth,
They aspire
To become gods ... b.

The whole dream is a series of lyrics, in which the musical character of the verse is apparent. Various composers had considered setting the poem to music for use as an oratorio. Dr. Elgar did so, and bases his fame chiefly on this masterpiece. It was first performed in London in Westminster Cathedral in 1903. Critics declare that Elgar's oratorio surpasses in the perfection of its harmony even the tone poems of Richard Strauss.

a. The Dream of Gerontius - Egan, Ed., p. 25
b. The Dream of Gerontius - Egan, Ed., p. 44

Turning now from the sublime to the ridiculous, one finds that Italy, the cradle of so many of the arts, had long been the home of "opera buffa" as an antidote for the serious opera. In France, the same style of entertainment was called "opera comique". It remained for Gilbert and Sullivan, in England, in the latter part of the nineteenth century to develop this type of acting, dialogue, and music into their world famous operettas. These operettas are so familiar to everyone that only a word concerning them is necessary. How much of the comic effect is due to the rollicking music, how much to the sparkling dialogue, how much to the capable acting, and just how much to the chanting as well as the singing of the Chorus?

The past twenty years have seen a growing interest in the lyrics of the English poet Francis Thompson. His short life covered the last half of the nineteenth century. His best known poem THE HOUND OF HEAVEN has led numbers of lovers of poetry to read more and more of his lyrics and, by thus sharing in Thompson's deepest thoughts and feelings, to experience aesthetic pleasure

and spiritual exhilaration.

His poetical works contain many lyrics in which Choruses are found. Only one will be mentioned, both because of its form and by reason of the fact that it shows a side of Thompson's nature not often evidenced in his poetry. Most readers are likely to think of him as one who wrote only one type of poetry, - the mystical. They are charmed to find this little whimsical gem: -

CHEATED ELSIE

Elsie was a maiden fair
As the sun
Shone upon;
Born to teach her swains despair
By smiling on them every one;
Born to win all hearts to her
Just because herself had none .....

As she wanders in a fairy wood one day, she meets a pedlar who questions her:

Lack ye land or lack ye gold,
What I give, I give unsold;
Lack ye wisdom, lack ye beauty,
To your suit he
Gives unpaid, the pedlar old.

The Fairies warn Elsie:

Beware, beware! the gifts he gives
One pays for while one lives!

Nevertheless, Elsie asks for a heart and is

given one.

> Scarce the present did she take
> When the heart began to ache.

She wishes to return the gift to the pedlar at once, but -

FAIRIES - The gifts he gives, he takes not back.

ELSIE - Ah, why the present did I take,
And knew not that a heart would ache?

FAIRIES - Ache! and is that all of sorrow? -
Beware, beware - a heart will break!
a.

Perhaps the greatest moderm movement toward the return of the speaking Chorus in contemporary drama is to be found among the playwrights of the Irish Renaissance. For their themes they chose the heroes of Gaelic mythology and of Irish history. William Butler Yeats was the founder of the movement. It was while he was writing his plays that the Abbey Theatre group was formed in Dublin, thus affording him a sympathetic cast for his dramas.

Since then the Irish Players, as they are now known, have become world renowned for their talent in producing beautiful speech and for their refreshingly natural simplicity of acting. In their hands

a. Poems of Francis Thompson - Connolly, p. 141

the frail and ethereal dramas of Yeats are handled delicately and, even in the Choruses, achieve a distinction that is truly classical.

When the women blend their voices in these lines from ON BAILE'S STRAND the effect produced is one that is never to be forgotten:

> May this fire have driven out
> The shape-changers that can put
> Ruin on a great king's house
> Until all be ruined ..... a.

The poetic values of Irish-English speech are present also in the presentation of the plays of Synge. His plays are somewhat more realistic than those of Yeats, but they contain much of real verbal beauty as well as irony and satire. Sean O'Casey, Lennox Robinson, and the later realistic dramatists of the Irish school have, as may be surmised, dropped the Chorus in their strivings toward Modernism.

In America, Eugene O'Neill, notably in the play LAZARUS LAUGHED uses the Chorus with as telling effect as did the early Greeks. In the Cast of Characters are noted a Chorus of Lazarus' Followers, Chorus of

a. Plays of the Irish Renaissance - Canfield, p. 38

Roman Senators, Chorus of the Guards, Chorus of Youths and Girls, and Chorus of the Roman Populace. Surely this drama makes as great a use of Choruses as did those of Sophocles and Euripides.

At the close of Act I are found the directions:

CHORUS (in a chanting manner)

Lazarus laughs!
Our hearts grow happy!
Laughter like music!
The wind laughs!
The sea laughs!
Spring laughs from the earth!
Summer laughs in the air!
Lazarus laughs! ..... a.

The latest famous modern play in which an author emphasizes his dramatic moments and climaxes by employing a Chorus is in T. S. Eliot's MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL, which brings this history of the drama up to date.

The best examples of plays being written today with the idea of presenting them in choral speaking form are those of Dr. Gordon Bottomley of England. In his plays he has recreated the spirit of early

a. Lazarus Laughed - O'Neill, p. 22

times, especially in Spain and in Scotland. Dr. Bottomley is an ardent enthusiast of the newly-revived speech art, and has done much by his writings to provide suitable, interesting, and emotionally stimulating material for the verse speaking choirs now so popular in his country.

In the foregoing pages the history of the chant has been traced from primitive and pre-historic times through the flowering of Greek and Roman drama, the degradation of the stage, its rebirth under Christian domination, the influence of the Renaissance and Humanism upon the drama up to the rise of Realism today. All along the line the Chorus has persisted, sometimes of great importance, sometimes almost obliterated. Only in the periods of total or partial eclipse of the theatre itself has this vital element been entirely absent. It is not difficult to draw the very evident conclusion that the greatest of dramas through three thousand years of stagecraft have owed at least part of their immortality to the art

of employing the human voice in the Chorus.

Inasmuch as the study of the human voice is one of the first requisites of the music teacher, it may well be considered at this point. No musical instrument has a more nearly perfect structure; no man-made instrument can be trained to such an infinite variety of inflection and of agility. Only the voice can recreate the poet's thoughts.

The foundation of all singing tone is breath - the same breath which while it is within the body, feeds to the very life-blood its vital oxygen. The singer learns to breathe from the diaphragm, and through practice to control the outgoing breath to meet his every need. Trained vocalists are able to sing a complete phrase so that there is never an awkward break in the continuous flow of the music until the end of the musical thought.

Placing the mind upon the vocal mechanism while singing leads to a consciousness of that organ which is undesirable. At the same time, however, one who has studied the art of singing

is familiar with its structure and use. He knows that the vocal cords are governed by the same principles of science as are the strings of a violin, - the thinner the string the higher will be the pitch of the tone; the shorter the string the higher will the pitch be also. The increase of tension on a string, whether it be long or short, thick or thin, raises its pitch. The overtones of the vibrating string as it divides itself into ventral segments follow the laws governing all vibrating strings regardless of their position in the human voice or on any of the numerous stringed instruments.

Being aware of these fundamental facts, the singer uses his voice without abusing it by attempting extreme ranges in pitch. This is a very salutary lesson, since too much tension exerted upon the vocal cords would be capable of causing the same irreparable damage as would be brought about by turning the key on a violin string too tightly. So, too, the singer does not expect from the long, rather thick vocal cords of a large

man the same flexibility and agility as can be developed in a soprano voice. A violin is a violin, and a double bass is never anything else.

In singing, the voice should be kept well forward in the mouth so that the tone will be enriched and strengthened by the best possible resonators, - the roof of the mouth and the nasal and head passages. Besides bringing to the tone a clarity not possible when the tone is kept far back in the throat, this placement of the voice in a forward position lessens fatigue on the entire throat, a very valuable asset when the voice is used a great deal.

As has been previously stated, the human voice is the only instrument which can satisfy the demands of an audience for the fullest meaning of a song. Without clarity of diction, half of the enjoyment of a song is lost. In whatever language the singer uses, he learns how to produce pure vowel sounds and to articulate and enunciate clearly. Flexibility of the tongue and free lip movement are indispensable factors, as are also the use of the teeth and hard

and soft palates. The singer must know the positions of these articulators which will give the best and the most intelligible enunciation to all the vowel and consonant sounds without lessening the freedom of the voice in its equally important function of producing good singing tone.

A further element in singing must be considered. Fundamental breath control, proper use of the vocal cords, good voice placement, and excellent articulation might all be present and yet the song might not satisfy discriminating taste. Unless the vocalist understands the meaning of the song and sings with expression, the final result is mediocre.

All songs are written in either of two ways. A composer is either inspired by an already written poem and feels the urge to further enhance its beauty and meaning by setting it to music, or the poet is so impressed by a lovely melody that he expresses in words what the music means to him. In both cases it is the problem of the singer to study the words and the music. Being aided in his task by the suggestions of the composer, he must interpret the

song as nearly as possible in the style and with the meaning it was intended to convey by both poet and musician. Every good singer gives much thought and study to expression in singing in order that his rendition of a song may not be too highly colored by his own personality.

The trus musician must also possess a solid background of musical theory. This consists in part of a knowledge of the system of notation in universal use in the Western Hemisphere. The way in which the combination of lines and spaces to denote variations in pitch was devised makes a fascinating study. From the old "neumes" or wavy lines through the use of the eleven-line staff to the modern fixed ten lines, divided into two staves, upon which all present day music is written, there is seen a continuous development in the art of placing music upon the written page or upon the printed page which reflects credit upon the ingenuity of those who have gone before in the field of music.

Attention has already been called to the fact

that rhythm was the first element of music to be discovered by primitive man. It is still the basic principle of music. Rhythm may best be defined as the regular recurrence of accent. The forms most used, having within them infinite combinations of minor divisions, are duple, triple, and quadruple rhythms, consisting of two, three, or four beats in a measure. The first beat is invariably given the strongest accent. Ultra-modern composers, as have present day poets, often incorporate several rhythms within the same composition, but the underlying laws of rhythm remain unaltered. An unerring sense and feeling for rhythm is a vital requisite of the musician.

Melody, or the tune, is the next consideration. The ancient chants and recitatives were known to make very little use of variations in pitch. Words were often sung or chanted on a single tone. If one wishes to hear authentic presentations of this type of singing, it can still be heard as "plain-song" in certain churches, in the oratorios of Handel and Haydn, and especially in the early operas.

Since medieval times melody has reached far in two directions. The first consists of directness of approach, using only the pattern of skips and phrases which best interpret the musician's idea. The second is the florid type which became so popular during the development of opera. In the florid type of melody one finds runs, skips, jumps, trills, and all varieties of musical gymnastics in such abundance that the fundamental melody is completely obscured. The listener becomes interested principally in the skill of the performer as he displays his technique in voice or instrument.

The rise of opera marks also the beginnings of harmony. The only approach to harmony before this era was through the use of rounds. In this early form of vocal or instrumental music the single notes of the melody were played through to the end and were often repeated many times. One voice or instrument began a few measures after the other so that two consonant sounds were heard at the same time. Clever composers could arrange their melodies so that as many as four or six voices or instru-

ments, starting at different times, blended perfectly in harmony during the entire composition. This gave the effect of a four or six-voiced harmony.

Modern musicians, having studied the rules of harmony, can look at a piece of music and hear in imagination the harmonic blending of the parts in a whole series of chords. Dissonances, which defy all the set rules of harmony, are used today either to achieve a striking effect or perhaps to show a certain disdain on the part of the "moderns" for the old conventions. This is true in art and poetry as well as in music, and reflects the present trend of the arts toward Realism.

However, no composer can hope to explore new fields who has not previously become acquainted with the old. It is only by a full understanding of classical harmony that one can even approach an appreciation of modern music. Nobody knows this better than the musician himself. A thorough training, then, in all the branches of harmony must be acquired by the prospective musician or teacher of music.

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The modern orchestra needs but little consideration here, since so many of its features are duplicated in the singing chorus. Even the ordinary layman who has some interest in music knows the division of the orchestra into its four choirs, - strings, woodwinds, brass, and percussion instruments. He knows the combinations of these which please him most. But the musician must know also the possibilities of all the instruments and their best uses, the extremes of their ranges in pitch, and the blending of the various choirs by which the desired tonal effects may be attained.

One who aspires to the conducting of an orchestra must possess an innate sense of proportion. He must not attempt, for example, to make a simple minuet sound like a symphonic poem. Nuance and phrasing, tempo, rhythm, and interpretation all depend, in spite of the contrary opinions of the layman, upon the musicianship of the conductor. He has drilled his group at rehearsals, and in the concert he continues to enforce upon the players his individual interpretation of the music. Otherwise there can

be no unity.

The conductor of a chorus stands in the same relationship to his group of singers as does the conductor of an orchestra to the instrumentalists. Especially with untrained voices, correct breathing and breath control must be taught. The conductor s own knowledge of the voice mechanism will determine his choice of vocalises which will be used to insure correct placement of all the voices. He will know the possibilities of the human voice, the extremes of the ranges of all voices from bass to soprano, and how to blend them harmoniously while keeping a balance of the desired tonal quality.

Having assembled his selected group of the best available voices, the choral conductor will continue to instruct them in clear diction. Singing expressively may well be insisted upon from the very start. When a selection is ready for public performance it should bring clearly to the audience the beauty of the human voice, intelligible diction, tonal effects, and an adequate interpretation of the words and of the music. The conductor alone is responsible for the success or failure of

the performance.

Returning now to the subject of choral speaking, it will be noted that the use of the Chorus as an important adjunct to the drama has been stressed in this paper. How then can the choral speaking movement of the present day be considered new since it is merely the revival of an ancient art which was never completely out of sight for three thousand years?

Yet it is in the fact of the presence of the Chorus in drama exclusively that one finds the answer to this question. Choral speaking has come at last to children and to all others who are interested enough to wish to profit by its training and to enjoy its emotional appeal. It has returned to the masses from which it originally sprang.

Most great discoveries or inventions are the direct result either of necessity or of chance. Choral speaking can lay claim to both. Shortly after the close of the World War, a Scotchwoman, Marjorie Gullan, had the interesting experience

of training groups in the old Greek Choruses which were to be part of a speaking contest at a festival in Glasgow. The success of the venture led her to experiment further using Scotch ballads and lyrical passages from the Bible. Choral speaking was soon introduced into England, Ireland, and finally to America.

Admittedly it is true that nowhere in the whole British Empire is the English language spoken with perfect pronounciation or with really clear diction. There is less distortion of vowel and consonant sounds in the speech of educated people in Dublin, Ireland and in Boston, Massachusetts than in any of the other sections of the world. Both the Dublin Irishman and the Bostonian err mainly in their pronounciation of the consonant "r". The Irishman has a tendency to roll the sound after the manner of the Scotch, while the Bostonian is likely to omit the sound entirely whenever possible. Here, then, in the revival of an old art, might be found the means of correcting the abuses of the mother tongue and of making all English-speaking people

intelligible to one another. The beautiful and forceful English language might at last be freed of sectional accents and brogues.

At present in America from the elementary schools through the colleges and teacher training institutions progressive educators are recognizing the widespread values to be realized from a program of instruction in choral speaking. Numbers of young people in this country are being provided with a vehicle by means of which they are able to unite in a satisfactory form of artistic expression.

America owes to Elizabeth Keppie of the California State College a debt of gratitude for having introduced the art of choral speaking into this country. Beginning in the West, the movement has spread to all parts of the United States.

Before considering some of the most important values of choral speaking, one point must be made perfectly clear. Not even its most enthusiastic advocates are willing to suggest that this form of expression can ever hope to supplant choral singing. Each method of the use of the human voice has certain

advantages over the other, and they cannot be considered as interchangeable. The speaking voice, no matter how fundamentally good as to timbre, placement, or use, can never equal or surpass the exquisite beauty of an equally good singing voice which has been well trained. By the use of this medium an audience is able to enjoy the melodies and harmonies of the masters as well as the beauty of poetry.

In choral singing, numbers of trained singers combine to form a group which, under the guidance of a capable conductor, can swell into a tumultuous crescendo of breath-taking harmony, weave the melodies of the various parts into the lovely and intricate patterns of the polyphonic style, or diminish in volume of tone until there is only the faintest chord, and the listener is barely conscious of the exact moment at which the voices were stilled to leave only the deepest silence. Then it is reality itself which seems unreal. No choral speaking group can approach the perfection of sheer loveliness, force, or

dynamic expression of a well-trained chorus.

One of the strongest arguments in favor of the increased use of choral speaking lies in the fact that, while not everyone is fortunate enough to possess a good singing voice, all who are not physically incapable of speech itself may take part. Even those who are handicapped by some of the so-called "speech defects" are aided in overcoming them and are able to enjoy with the others the numerous practical and cultural benefits of choral speaking and to respond, each in his own way, to the emotional stimulus of good poetry.

When one realizes that the voice of any individual has the same range of pitch from high to low whether used in speaking or in singing, it is easily seen that this circumstance favors the speaking voice in permitting infinite gradations of tone within the compass of the two-octave range common to most voices. The singer is limited to the tones and half tones of the key in which his piece is written, although being occasionally permitted the use of chromatic tones which are the

half steps between the whole tones of the scale. The average singing voice, using all possible chromatic and scale tones, has a range of only twenty-five notes. On the other hand, the speaking voice, having no set pitches which it must observe, is unhampered and may employ literally hundreds of tones within the same range. The freedom thus enjoyed by the speaking voice permits much greater flexibility than can be obtained from the singing voice.

As a nation, Americans do not know how to relax. This inability can justly be blamed upon the present age. There are so many interesting and enjoyable things to do that, even when the average American has just completed a hard day's work, he turns automatically to an evening filled with activity. If this is true of the present generation, how much more true will it be in the years to come when the children of today have become adults? As an evidence of the lack of knowledge on the part of Americans as to the necessity of frequent relaxation, one has only to glance at the

table of statistics detailing the number of men and women who break down physically and mentally each year. Shall this be true of the succeeding generations of Americans? Not if one of the cardinal principles of choral speaking is stressed as it should be.

Relaxation is the beginning point in choral speaking. There are numerous devices suitable for all ages from children to adults which can be utilized to teach the students to relax. The one used most often is the imitation of a rag doll. The whole body becomes as limp as the doll pattern. Practice along this line leads the student to a sense of the need of relaxation, and may even provide the means by which nervous disorders can be prevented. It is the first lesson in choral speaking and a very valuable one.

It seems odd that such a natural experience as breathing should have to be taught. Nevertheless it is true that very few people except trained singers and speakers breathe properly from the diaphragm. The ordinary person fills only the upper part of the lungs with air and is

somewhat ashamed of his inability to speak a phrase of moderate length without being obliged to "gasp for breath" in an awkward place. Correct breathing as it is taught in connection with choral speaking can be of great physical benefit, as well as fulfilling its duty in providing sufficient breath and the control of the breath for use in all speaking.

While it is not wise to mention much about the mechanics of voice production, - vocal cords and resonators - either to children or to adults, there are other ways in which the teacher may point out the differences between a well-placed voice and one that definitely is not. In this respect, the teacher should provide, especially in the early stages, as perfect a model as possible for imitation by the students.

Individual help is often needed to correct faulty voice placement. The source of the unpleasing tone may be excessive nasality, sectional twang, or the keeping of the voice too far back in the throat. The nasal tone found in the speech of New Englanders is their worst voice defect. The

elimination of this nasality in the voices of children would mean an improvement that would be noted in future years.

The leader of the verse speaking choir will have to listen carefully to the various registers of the individual voices. Since the pitch of a tone can be regulated by tightening or slackening the tension on the vocal cords, the careful instructor will guard against both extremes as being dangerous to the voice mechanism. Children as well as nervous adults will have a tendency to put too much tension on the vocal cords, raising the voice to a pitch where it becomes harsh and squeaky. The astute leader of a choral speaking group must be able to use previously gained knowledge of the human voice so that each voice of the choir will be understood by him as regards its natural, inherent quality.

Having established the limits of the ranges in pitch of all the voices, it becomes the duty of the instructor to teach the students how to develop flexibility. By this is meant the raising

and lowering of the voice within reasonable and ear-satisfying limits. The one-tone method of speaking is very tiresome to any audience. There are few people who at one one time or another have not heard excellent speeches and sermons, model teaching lessons, or poetical masterpieces ruined in their presentation by the use of a monotonous, sing-song voice. As a soporific, this method of speaking can be highly recommended, if it does not indeed irritate the listener until even sleep would be impossible. As a means of convincing, edifying, or interpretive rendering of the spoken word it fails utterly.

When children or adults have had the advantage of training in choral speaking, flexibility of the voice is developed. Messages delivered by the flexible voice are apt to arrest the attention of the listener, to keep him on the alert, and to achieve their purpose whether that be to convince him of the merits of a certain candidate, to exhort him for the good of his spiritual well-being, to increase his store of knowledge, or to pass on to him the beauty and deeper meaning of a poem. The

teaching of flexibility of the human voice is, therefore, an important objective in a program of choral speaking.

As an antidote for slovenly speech, clear diction is developed. The use of "tongue-twisters" and jingles is suggested. While possessing no literary merit in themselves, they are conducive to better enunciation through their use as drills on the vowel and consonant sounds.

Even well educated and cultured Americans need to become aware of the fact that their speech is often unintelligible because of their carelessness in pronouncing their words correctly and articulating them clearly. They fail to realize that one of the finest attributes of the English language is its forcefulness. There are in it plenty of open vowel sounds and hard consonants. These sounds must be spoken distinctly if one does not wish to be accused of having slovenly speech. Clear diction and better all-round articulation are the result of conscious thought and practice of the correct forms. Choral speaking can do much to improve American speech by calling attention to common errors and eliminating

them.

"For the deeper things men think and feel
He gave the poet words to reveal."
Anonymous

Children are natural lovers of poetry. In repeating their nursery rhymes they are completely happy in the enjoyment of the rhythms and of the little stories contained in them. What happens to this spontaneous reaction to poetry as the years pass?

If one looks back to his own school days he may find the answer. As soon as primary days were left behind, pupils were forced to memorize long meaningless poems and to recite them in "concert recitation" in class. Upon reaching high school, the added chore of writing from memory long selections, putting in all the punctuation marks, led to a still further distaste for the whole affair. When a dissection of the poems was insisted upon, with emphasis on the study of metrical forms, the majority of students became convinced that poetry was nothing more than a diabolical scheme on the part of both writers and teachers to provide irksome tasks for high school pupils. Is it any wonder that so many

otherwise well-read adults of this generation shy away from poetry? They have been robbed of their innate appreciation of this art by the very agencies which should have fostered and developed it.

But there is hope for this generation of students. A complete program of choral speaking, beginning in the primary schools and continuing through high school and college, is designed to stimulate and encourage the child's natural poetic instincts.

Except in highly technical courses, the emphasis should be placed where it belongs. Beauty of expression, rhythm, and the understanding of the deeper meanings of the works of the poets are the ideals which characterize the study of all poetry used by the verse speaking choir. To those who are now being so trained, and to all those who follow as this field of instruction widens its scope still further, a whole world of cultural experiences awaits.

Children as well as adults enjoy working together. The wise director of a choral speaking group will give his students, whether young or old, as wide a freedom as possible in the selection of the poems or lyrical prose to be worked out by the class. In all cases,

the works chosen for consideration will be only those which the teacher knows to be appropriate for the age and ability of his group. The selections will all be already well-known and appreciated by the teacher. Then no matter what poetic passages are selected for study, there will be no lack of enthusiasm in the leadership. Except in the case of classes of very young children, the director of the choral speaking choir will do well to draw out from the students their individual reactions to the poems. Numbers of different ideas can be tried out as to the rhythms, the accented words, the expression to be used, or the way in which the poems may best be presented.

Authorities on the subject of choral speaking recognize five different types of presenting poems or rhythmic prose. The first is that in which a solo voice speaks part of the poem and the group gives the refrain. This is the simplest type. At first the teacher will set the mood and tempo, allowing the children to answer with the refrain in like mood and tempo. Antiphonal speaking is next developed. When the pupils have reached the required stage of advancement, they may attempt to try out certain poems

which lend themselves to solo work, a line of the poem being spoken in turn by each child. It will be found that some poems can be made more interesting by the use of part speaking. In this type the voices are divided into choirs of "light" and "dark" voices as determined by their natural timbre. The last, and most difficult method used in choral speaking, is unison work.

When the poem has been chosen and the pupils have decided which type of choral speaking may best be used, the class is encouraged to work together to eliminate any difficulties which may be encountered in the form of wrong pronunciations of known words or the misunderstanding of new words.

The final interpretation and expression used in presenting the poem, and any gestures which are added by way of emphasis, are all the result of the combined of the pupils and the teacher as they unite in a common purpose. The underlying democratic spirit of the whole project is evident. As mentioned before, the fact that all may share in the preparation of the work and in its final rendition is of great worth in providing cultural and emotional experiences which would

otherwise be impossible for the majority of persons.

Occasionally a backward child who does few things well can be persuaded to speak a line as a solo in the "line-a-child" type of choral speaking. In this way his inferiority complex can be lessened somewhat by his realization that in this branch of school work, at least, he is not less than the equal of his schoolmates. The shy and reticent child can be brought forward in the same manner and thus relieved of some of his timidity.

The last-mentioned use of choral speaking is not confined to children. Numbers of adults who have held themselves aloof through self-consciousness lose this undesirable character trait during the training process and thereby gain in poise and self-assurance.

To sum up, the aims and objectives of the choral speaking movement are both immediate and remote. Improvement in breath control due to proper breathing is an aid to health. Better diction is noticeable in the work itself and cannot fail to carry over into every day speech. Once the speaking voice has been properly placed and fixed it becomes as much a part

of the personality as any other individual trait. So deeply ingrained in the human being is his response to rhythm that it need only be stimulated to become a permanent attribute. The emotional response to poetry begins with nursery rhymes. Properly fostered in the modern school, - not crushed out by antiquated methods of teaching - the delight of emotional response to poetry need never be lost in adult years. The spirit of democratic fellowship which dominates group participation in choral speaking is important in aiding in the development of the social graces. Any remaining self-consciousness on the part of the individual members of the group cannot fail to be eliminated little by little as the work continues and public performances are given. Finally, the members of a verse speaking choir are led to an increased appreciation of some of the best types of the literature of the ages through their study of poetry and lyrical prose. This appreciation is still further heightened by sharing the finished product with an audience.

A word should be said in passing in regard to the assertion so frequently made by those who are

not familiar with the aims, objectives, or methods of teaching choral speaking, namely, that this "new-fangled" art is nothing more or less than the old-fashioned "concert recitation" under a new name.

The present generation of adults in America can recall the latter form all too vividly. Except in its use of some of the same poems in choral speaking, there is no resemblance between this form and "concert recitation".

The old style teacher was the one who chose the poems to be memorized. It was she who enforced her private interpretations on the pupils. No attention was paid to the rhythms, to relaxation, or to clarity of diction. As to emotional response or true appreciation of the meanings of the poems studied, they were entirely lacking. Pupils used the same dead, sing-song tone in reciting IN SCHOOL DAYS as in the speaking of THE RECESSIONAL.

They stood erect and stiff, hands at sides or clasped behind them, and each face showed about as much animation as the proverbial wooden Indian.

How different is the verse speaking choir to see as well as to hear! One can sense immediately

that the children or adults actually feel the poem and are not averse to expressing by voice, facial expression, or by gesture what the poem means to them. Voices are vibrantly alive; lips and tongues are active; eyes sparkle and mouths smile or scowl. Perhaps even the shoulders are raised or the heads are nodded! There is no doubt on the part of the audience that the group appreciates the poem being recited. They know it to be an example of good literature, and each member of the choir is desirous of passing on to the audience the same joy which he is experiencing in the full appreciation of the poem.

What part has the conductor of the choral speaking group played in the attainment of this success? The first meeting of the group saw its organization. The members became acquainted with the leader and with each other. Interest was aroused by an explanation of just what choral speaking is, its aims and objectives, and by giving a brief history of the movement and its present status in this country and abroad. At the outset, emphasis was placed on the idea that each individual should try to understand and feel the beauty of both the rhythm and the words of the poems

or prose in order to gain an appreciation of the true meaning as intended by the poet. The enjoyment to be obtained from the work was stressed.

As a further incentive, perhaps a few well-chosen recordings of famous verse speaking choirs were played. The group was much impressed. Would it be possible for them to reach such perfection? All of the members were able to speak, and that was the only requisite. They need only acquire the proper mind-set. The ultimate goal was assuredly well worth the time spent.

As the lessons progressed all the necessary training was given by the leader. Proper breathing, breath control, voice placement, relaxation, good articulation, flexibility of the voice, response to rhythm, the meanings of the poems, appreciation and resultant enjoyment - all were taught or guided in the right direction by the director because of their importance at any particular time and by reason of their far-reaching ultimate aims.

The members of the verse speaking choir were tested individually to determine the timbre of the voices. The knowledge thus obtained was used in

dividing the group into "light" and "dark" sections. Any minor speech defects were noted during the testing, and these pupils were given special instruction in overcoming them.

While allowing the greatest possible number of interpretations of the poems to be tried out, the leader gradually brought about in the members of the group a sense of the artistic so that the style of presentation chosen was in reality the result of his leadership. Once the standard had been set by the full consent of those taking part, it was understood to be the duty of all to abide by it for the sake of unity.

As soon as possible definite signals for conducting were explained. These signals were never varied. All were taught to watch the conductor. Perhaps the choirs were seated in an orderly plan which had for its inspiration the succession of notes on a piano keyboard. The lowest voices would then be at the left of the conductor, those of middle range in the centre, and the highest voices at the extreme right. This plan might have been reversed, but whatever grouping was once established, it was adhered

to strictly so that no confusion would ever result from the conductor's calling in the wrong choir.

Did the director use a baton? Personal choice decided that. A baton might have been used, or the signals might have been given with the hands or simply with one finger. The scheme chosen was the one which was used exclusively, becoming fixed in the minds of the students who learned to follow each movement.

Presuming that the director used a baton in much the same manner as does the leader of a singing chorus, it is very likely that he moved it in a small arc from side to side before a word was spoken by the Chorus, thereby setting the tempo. The baton, when held in a raised position, meant "attention". On a forward movement, all the voices included in the opening lines of the poem began as one. A good attack was the result. From the on, each movement of the baton had its own particular meaning. The leader kept the beat, urging the speakers on if they had a tendency to lag, or slowing them down if necessary. They increased or diminished the volume of tone according to the signals. Solo voices came in on time without a

break in the rhythm. After the final word of the poem, all the voices "cut" at exactly the same instant.

Having carefully observed the directions at rehearsals, the choir was able to follow the conductor in the public performance. The choral speaking group was well repaid for the work of each member in building up within himself the skill which was necessary in order to impart to an audience his own sense of appreciation of the poem.

But where was the leader all this time? He was seated as inconspicuously as possible either in the wings of the stage or in the first row of the audience. Very few, except the members of the choir, were able to see his directions. They were given with much less movement than is used by the director of a singing chorus, and if the audience was entirely ignorant of his presence, imagining that the verse speaking group was so well trained that it needed no direction, then he was quite satisfied to remain "invisible".

It must be evident from the explanation just given concerning the training and conducting of a choral speaking group that a great deal of the knowledge and experience built up through years of musical

activity can be turned to good advantage in the organization and conducting of a verse speaking choir.

As a further argument in favor of the choice of the music teacher as a teacher of choral speaking, one may mention some of the similarities between the art of music and the art of poetry, which is the chief medium used in choral speaking, and between the singing voice and the speaking voice.

There is much of beauty in both music and poetry. The charm exerted by this abstract, ethereal thing which we call beauty is exerted on the senses, - in the case of both music and poetry, upon the ear. It is dependent for its charm upon harmony of form. When the necessary component elements are present, they in turn react upon the mind to increase the imagination and to stimulate emotion.

When is a sound beautiful? When it is blended with other consonant sounds? Yes, but also as a single bird-note, in one tone of a musical instrument, or as a single tone either spoken or sung. The overtones which are present during the vibration of the vocal cords supply the harmony which is not distinguishable from the fundamental tone although it

produces the richness of tone which is called beauty of timbre. A single tone gains in beauty when combined with other similar tones all having the same consonant overtones. Following this line of reasoning, an orchestra would be considered more beautiful than a single instrument, and a chorus or a verse speaking choir would possess more charm than a single instrument or one voice singing or speaking alone.

In the study of musical form one finds phrases of similar lengths, usually four or eight measures long. There is a uniformity of rhythm within a composition. The intervals in the melody are never so dissimilar as to destroy its unity. Music may be said to possess as fundamental qualties, unity, variety, and symmetry.

In what ways does poetry resemble music? Poetic form also consists of lines of definite lengths, corresponding to the phrases in music. The metrical pattern, or the rhythm, of any poem could be written by a system of musical notation. The unity of a poem is established by its assonance and rhyme. The poet uses accented and unaccented syllables in much the same manner as the musician employs "accent and

release" in his compositions.

If the lyric can be defined as that type of poetry in which the soul of the poet, becoming overmastered by his feelings, cries out from within, cannot the same definition be applied to nearly all musical works? The exception is found in "absolute" music of the intricate type of the fugue. In this case the composer is confronted with a more or less mathematical proposition. He must plan how he can best introduce the four, five, or six voices or instruments at various places in the music and weave the melodies into harmonious chords. He is more interested in demonstrating his skill than in expressing his feelings. It must be admitted that "absolute" music and lyrical poetry have little in common.

The form of poetry and the form of music are, as has been explained, of like nature. This is true to such an extent that, if a poem is not musical, it is not classed as good poetry. Every line in verse can be set to a phrase of music just as all musical compositions, except "absolute" works, are possible of poetic interpretation.

There is an old theory which claims that when

numbers of people sing together the hearts and pulses of both singers and listeners beat in unison. The currents of life in the veins, the nerves, and the brains, - even the souls of all are affected. If this theory is true for group singing, it must be equally true for group speaking.

From all the foregoing it can readily be seen that the same fundamental qualities and attributes which make for success in a music teacher are necessarily present in a good teacher of choral speaking. After a thorough study of the history of this art through the ages, and of its present revival as a means of improving speech while at the same time teaching and fostering an appreciation of good literature, if the music teacher feels an inclination to enlarge the field of his endeavors to include choral speaking, the additional information and teaching procedures may be gained by reading any of the numerous books on the subject, or better still, by taking a course under a competent instructor.

Both by his natural endowments and by his previous training in music, he should be well qualified to lead his students. Most lovers of

good music are also lovers of good poetry. This is particularly true of the lyrical type of poetry used to such a great extent in choral speaking. The music teacher will have an ingrained appreciation of the lyric, inasmuch as it so closely resembles the form of music. Otherwise, he cannot be considered as having one of the first requisites of a musician, - the feeling for beauty as expressed in rhythmical sounds.

The speaking voice of the teacher must be of good timbre and well placed so that it can be imitated by the students until such time as they have learned to use their voices correctly.

All the mechanics of breathing and breath control, of the use of the vocal cords and resonators, of the proper functions of the lips, the teeth, the tongue, and the palates in producing clear articulation have been learned by the student of singing. It can be presumed that he has carried over these abilities into the daily use of his speaking voice as a means of rendering it intelligible as well as beautiful in its every day function as a common means of communicating his thoughts to others.

The experience of the music teacher in the organization, training, and leadership of a choral singing group is of invaluable aid to him in providing the technique to be used with a choral speaking choir.

The same good taste which leads him to avoid cheap popular music having no lasting value will also serve as a deterrent in the choice of material for the verse speaking group. Only those poems and selections of rhythmic prose which contain inherent poetical beauty of thought and expression will be chosen, and these will be suited to the group with which he is working both as to their emotional appeal and to their adaptability to the age and stage of advancement of the students with whom he is working.

Knowledge of the flexibility possible in the speaking as well as in the singing voice will enable the music teacher who also teaches choral speaking to avoid any monotony of tone. While guarding against this fault, care must be taken not to allow the students to strain their voices in the extreme upper or lower ranges. Again, the volume of tone produced by the speakers will never be allowed to

reach a point at which there is too much tension on the vocal cords. The music teacher knows too much about the dangers of such a procedure to permit the misuse of one of the most useful and expressive organs.

In common with good teachers of any subject, the leader of the verse speaking choir will endeavor to bring out the best that is in all his pupils, never showing favoritism to the specially gifted, but rather will he give to all an equal chance, even to the most retiring and timid students.

When the time comes for public performances, the wise director will be certain that the choir is well prepared, and he will conduct them with as little of the element of "show" as possible. Instead, he will rely on good judgment in the choice of the poems or prose to be spoken, on the training of the choir, and on its appreciation of the selections to bring their beauty and meaning to the audience.

As the reader has wended his way through this thesis, it must have become apparent that the writer has attempted to prove his original statement that the good teacher of music has the same underlying aesthetic appreciation of the beauty of poetry which makes for a

certainty of success in the teaching of choral speaking, since the arts of music and of poetry are so closely allied both as to form and purpose. The years of preparation followed by teaching experience in the field of music can be made to yield rich harvests when applied to the art of choral speaking.

It may then be logically concluded that courses in this ancient art, now newly revived and taking its proper place as a means of promoting better speech and a keener appreciation of poetry among all the people of this country, ought by right to be included in the curricula of all institutions of learning. Especially does it become obvious that conservatories and colleges of music should incorporate this sister art into their courses of study to the end that the music teacher may be prepared to utilize his talents and training both in the teaching of all branches of music and in the organization and conducting of a verse speaking choir.

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